



August 30, 2006

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Hon. Norm Rice, Co-Chair  
Mr. John Stanton, Co-Chair  
Regional Transportation Commission  
c/o Trilogy Partners  
PO Box 53010  
Bellevue WA 98015-3010

Patsy Tsui Bonincontri

Dear Mr. Rice, Mr. Stanton, and RTC Members,

Aubrey Davis

The Sound Transit Citizen Oversight Panel (COP) is a 15-member volunteer panel authorized by the voters as part of Sound Move. For almost ten years we have been monitoring the region's progress in implementing high capacity transit and observing from a front-row seat what is working and what needs improvement in the regional transportation scene.

Bertha Eades

Don Green

We are the only independent, impartial citizen monitoring group with no institutional stake or special interest to preserve. COP has been preparing reports and letters on Sound Transit's performance regularly since 1997. In April 2005 we published *Sound Move Year 8*, our report to the public on the lessons learned in the first eight years. Today we write to provide you our consensus views on the state of regional transportation governance.

Miriam Helgeland

Bob Hitchcock

Bill LaBorde

First, COP believes that since the vote in November 1996 for our first regional plan, much progress in regional transportation has been made. The three regional entities, Sound Transit, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and Regional Transportation Improvement District (RTID), have each done good work and made good faith efforts to work together to coordinate their efforts. However, voluntary coordination has not always been enough to make good decisions that are in the regional interest.

Paul Masten

CT Purdom

Tom Ryan

After almost ten years of independent observation of Sound Transit, COP has identified three areas of concern with the current system that should be addressed by any governance reform effort:

Larry Shannon

Paul Wiesner

- a) **A comprehensive regional perspective is needed with the authority to prioritize regional interests and carry out transportation solutions.**

**Current authority is overly dispersed across three entities, each with a large federated board.**

- b) Real needs should drive priorities and programs, rather than response to modal and subarea equity and dedicated funding streams. Identified needs and priorities should ensure integrated solutions to regional issues.**
- c) The highly desirable goal of a seamless, efficient regional transit system has yet to be achieved. Local transit plans and services are not subjected to a regional “fit” nor are they accountable for operating efficiently. Consequently, inequitable services and cost burdens are common in the region.**

Despite defining these specific problems, we believe that PSRC and Sound Transit as agencies should **NOT** be dissolved or merged into each other. They each perform important, distinct functions within the region. PSRC is a well-regarded regional planning organization that also performs key Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) functions. PSRC also provides a forum for local government participation. Sound Transit has grown into a mature well-managed agency focused on project and service delivery. We would view it as a setback to the region if these functions had to be recreated.

We would suggest targeting solutions to the specific identified problems. COP believes that substantive improvements to governance can be made with modest, incremental changes. They include:

- Creation or restructuring of a single regional transportation board that has authority for prioritizing regional projects, both highway and transit. We favor an appointed board and a strong citizen accountability mechanism.**
- This regional board should be granted authority to approve, fund and allocate resources to regional road and transit projects and ensure they are integrated with each other.**
- The regional board should act as the voice of the region in negotiations with the state and local governments.**

We are not offering a detailed blueprint for solving every issue in the region. We believe there are many potential solutions that would work. The one we have proposed above is the one we believe must be the core of a strong, integrated and accountable new governance model.

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Like other observers who have come before you, our members are concerned that citizens in the region are frustrated with the current regional landscape. If plans are in place to address the governance issues, citizens will have renewed confidence when they vote on the ST2 and RTID plans on the ballot in 2007. **We strongly believe that reforms should take effect after the proposed November 2007 joint ballot election.**

In this letter we have focused on three areas in need of improvement and on a few suggestions for reform. We believe the key governance issues that need to be addressed are integration and prioritization.

We urge the RTC to focus first on specific areas needing change and to carefully targeted solutions to address those areas. We urge a motto of "Do no harm." Do not undo, restructure or change parts of the system that are working well. Finally, we urge you to distinguish among governance recommendations related to planning, prioritizing, funding, and project/service delivery.

With all citizens in the region, we thank you for taking on this difficult task and for listening to the many stakeholders and interested participants who want a voice in the process.

Sincerely,  
**CITIZEN OVERSIGHT PANEL**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Miller".

Karen Miller  
Chair

Cc: Sound Transit Board  
Joni Earl